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2015
AWARDS

AWARDS, SELECTED

8

2015 AWARDS: PACKAGING TOP 10

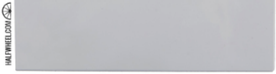
By Charlie Minato @charlieminato · On January 4, 2016

It's time to kick off our annual awards here at *halfwheel* and as such, we start with what is pretty.

This is the fourth year for our packaging awards which recognizes the best of the best when it comes to how cigars are presented. As in years past, the four reviewers of the site nominated cigars throughout the year. In total 47 different cigars were nominated, we each were then asked to name our top 20 without rankings. That narrowed the list down to 25 cigars, which we then individually ranked 1-12.

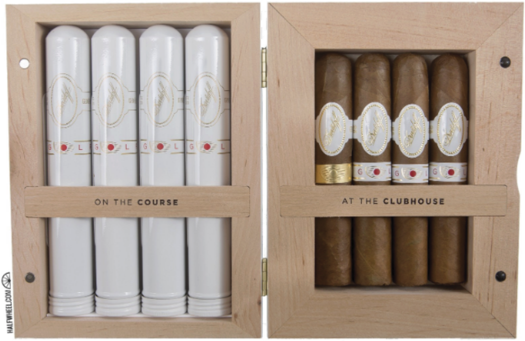
In order to be eligible the cigar must debut in 2015 and the packaging design itself must be substantially new for the year. In addition, humidors are disqualified unless that's the only way the cigar can be purchased.

Davidoff
GOLF
LIMITED MASTERS EDITION
2015



10. DAVIDOFF LIMITED MASTERS EDITION 2015

Davidoff created a fun, neat and very functional release with the Limited Masters Edition 2015. The whole idea behind the release is making a box for you and three friends and a round of golf. Four toro cigars to be smoked on the course and four robustos to be smoked after the round with one of them sporting a golden band to be awarded the winner—it's like your own little tournament in a box complete with a trophy.


ON THE COURSE
AT THE CLUBHOUSE
HALFWHEEL.COM

When you start breaking down the packaging however, each piece is impressive as well. The box uses a book-style opening, held shut with magnets so there isn't an obtrusive latch sticking out from the clean, sharp lines of the white box. Opening it up the four cigars on each side are held in with a strip of wood, labeling which cigars are for what part of the day, with that wood attaching to the interior with magnets as well.

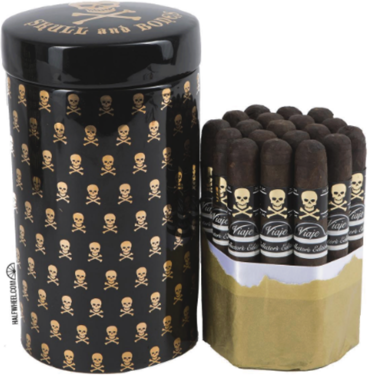
Overall an impressive display of packaging that not only functions well but looks good while doing it. — *Brian Burt.*

VIAJE
SKULL and BONES

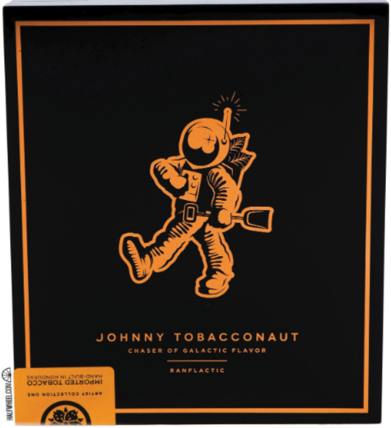
SKULL and BONES
HALFWHEEL.COM

9. VIAJE SKULL AND BONES TEN TON TESS GOLD COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Special edition releases housed in jars isn't a new concept, nor is it even a first for Viaje, however when it's done right it can be a beautiful thing.


SKULL and BONES
Viaje
HALFWHEEL.COM

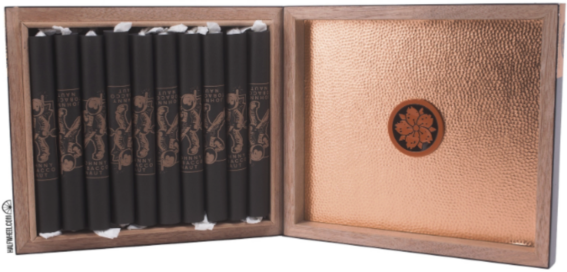
The Ten Ton Tess release featured two different blends, with one being released in two jars—a black one and a white one both featuring silver skulls—and then a special blend called the Ten Ton Tess Gold Collector's Edition. This release came in black jars featuring gold skulls, along with a black band sporting the same gold skull motif and was limited to 100 jars of 19 cigars. The striking gold and black contrast makes for an impressive display, and the jar will be a beautiful centerpiece that will look great on a shelf long after the cigars are smoked and gone. — *BB.*


JOHNNY TOBACCONAUT
CHASER OF GALACTIC FLAVOR
RANFLACTIC
HALFWHEEL.COM

8. ROOM101 JOHNNY TOBACCONAUT

One of the best examples of cigar packaging to be released this year is also one of the most unique, Room101's Johnny Tobacconaut.

First, there is the logo, which depicts an astronaut-esque figure holding a shovel and tobacco leaves peeking out of his backpack. Then there is the box itself, which is black with copper highlights and has such a high amount of gloss that any attempt to touch it without gloves on is a recipe for disaster.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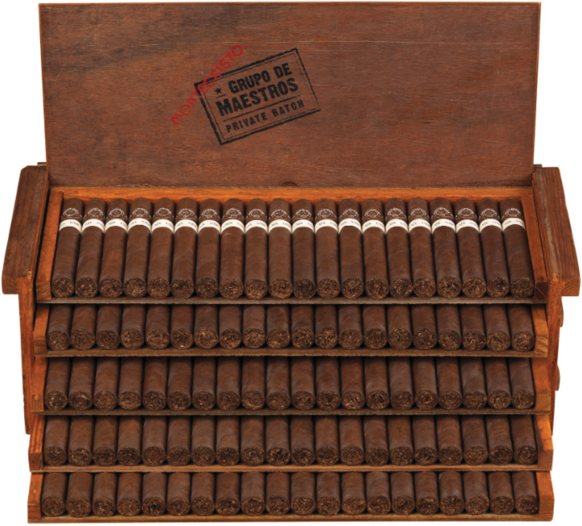
Inside, the cigars are packaged in Booth's familiar tissue paper as well as an outer paper wrap that also bears the Tobacconaut logo, with cigars alternating between right side up and upside down. I do find the use of nothing more than the name spelled out on the cigar band to be a bit on the boing side, but the fact that it has the same copper highlights and black background means it ties right back in with the overall theme. In addition, while the sakura flower logo has been brought over from previous Room101 releases, the interior of the box lid is lined with dimpled bronze foil, which does that much more to help the cigars enclosed inside stand out. —
Brooks Whittington.

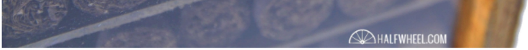

MONTECRISTO
GRUPO DE MAESTROS
PRIVATE BATCH

7. MONTECRISTO GRUPO DE MAESTROS PRIVATE BATCH

For a project such as the Montecristo Grupo de Maestros, it would have been easy to take a standard box, put the faces of the Grupo de Maestros on it along with their signatures and call it a day. But Altadis U.S.A. chose to go in a different direction: connect the cigars to the factory that they come out of, and do it in a very large format.

The cigar comes packaged in 100-count boxes that are made out of wooden crates from the Tabacalera de García factory in La Romana, Dominican Republic. Five slide-out trays each hold 20 cigars, with a plexiglass front to protect them from sliding out during travel. On each piece of wood there are unique sets of markings, from math equations to factory codes that designate what sat on that particular shelf to other random scribbles. While all 250 boxes have the same look, each is unique not just by its individually numbered lid, but by who might have needed to jot something down on it at some point in time.

SAN
BOX III / X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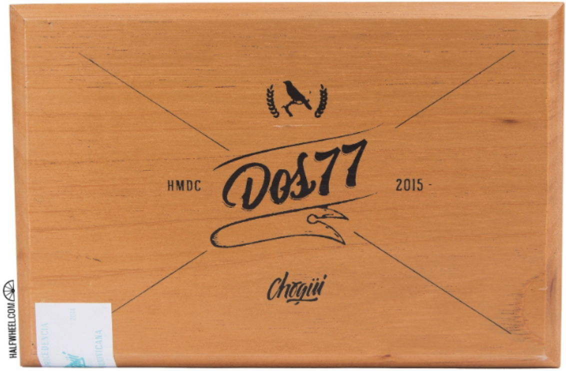
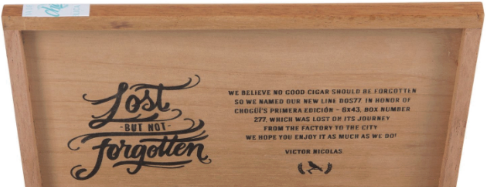
The Grupo de Maestros didn't get left out of the presentation however; a small box was included with each case that contained a brief introduction to who they are as well as a certificate of authenticity and detailed blend information.

It's a big presentation that certainly needs the cigars in it to maximize its effect, and while it may be difficult to store and display without a large cabinet humidor, it certainly makes an impact when given the proper space and connects the cigars to the place where they come from and where the Grupo de Maestros do most of their work. — *Patrick Lagreid.*


HMDC
Dos77
2015
Chogüí
HALFWHEEL.COM

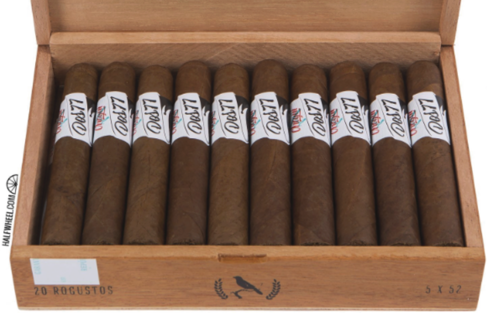
6. CHOGÜÍ DOS77 ROGUSTO

For Chogüí, it's about not trying too hard. It's one of a few companies that could most certainly be accused of making a *hipster cigar*—and I think some of that criticism (or praise) could be warranted. However much that statement makes you cringe, I don't know how you can't help but smile when you see the Dos77.


Lost
-BUT NOT-
forgotten

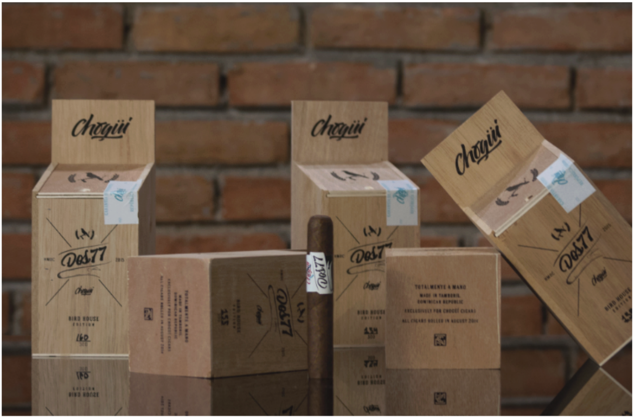
WE BELIEVE NO GOOD CIGAR SHOULD BE FORGOTTEN
SO WE NAMED OUR NEW LINE DOS77. IN HONOR OF
CHOGÜÍ'S PRIMERA EDICIÓN – 6X43, BOX NUMBER
277, WHICH WAS LOST ON ITS JOURNEY
FROM THE FACTORY TO THE CITY
WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT AS MUCH AS WE DO!

VICTOR NICOLAS

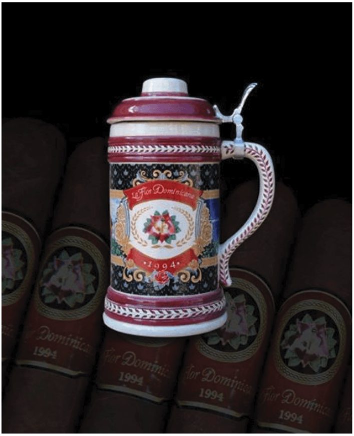

HALFWHEEL.COM
Dos77
20 ROBUSTOS
5 X 52

Chogüí's second release is a rarity for this list, getting recognition almost equally for its bands and boxes. Chogüí has been able to promote a new age style with a much brighter vibe, something that is oftentimes avoided in this industry. It's also worth nothing, the Dos77 features some unique hinges that allow for the lid to tuck in behind another piece of wood in the back of the box.

The story of Dos77 is told inside the box. Box number 277 out of 300 for the Chogüí Primera Edición, the company's first cigar, went missing in between the factory and the company's base in Santo Domingo. Victor Nicolás decided to pay homage to the release by creating Dos77, literally *two seven seven.*


Chogüí
Chogüí
Chogüí
Dos77
Dos77
Dos77
BIRD HOUSE EDITION
TOTALMENTE A MANO
MADE IN TAMBORIL, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
EXCLUSIVELY FOR CHOGÜÍ CIGARS
ALL CIGARS ROLLED IN AUGUST 2016

While the release pictured here is great, a limited edition Birdhouse Edition, with cigar boxes that look like birdhouses is even more creative. Only the regular version is eligible—and it's what the ranking is based off of—but the birdhouse shows Nicolás' ability to think outside the box when creating boxes. I'll admit, I cringed at that. — *Charlie Minato.*


La Flor Dominicana
1994
Flor Dominica
1994

5. LA FLOR DOMINICANA 1994 BEER STEIN

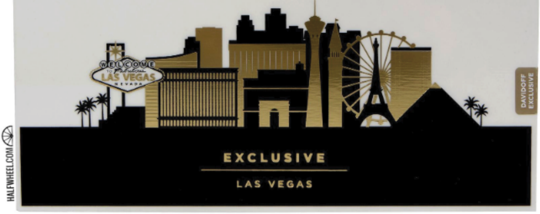
If there's one company I worry about visiting during the annual IPCPR Convention & Trade Show, it's La Flor Dominicana, because seemingly without fail there will be an item that I will want to take home with me. A few years back it was the tobacco barn with Airbender Maduros inside; this year it was the LFD Beer Stein, which contained a maduro version of the company's 1994 line in a 6 x 54 vitola.

Interestingly, one of the best features of the LFD Beer Stein may be the one that could be most easily overlooked: the use of Litto Gomez's signature hat as the lid. It also was a celebration of Litto and Ines Gomez's journey in the cigar business, with the original La Flor Dominicana logo and "1994" on one side, to the current logo on the other. In between was a vista of the La Canela fields and tobacco barn where a majority of tobacco used by the company originates.

But beyond the design, it was a very well made piece of packaging that also seemed to hold and protect the cigars inside it considerably well—something that can't always be said about designs such as this. And you can certainly use it to hold a good amount of your favorite beverage while enjoying one of the cigars from within.

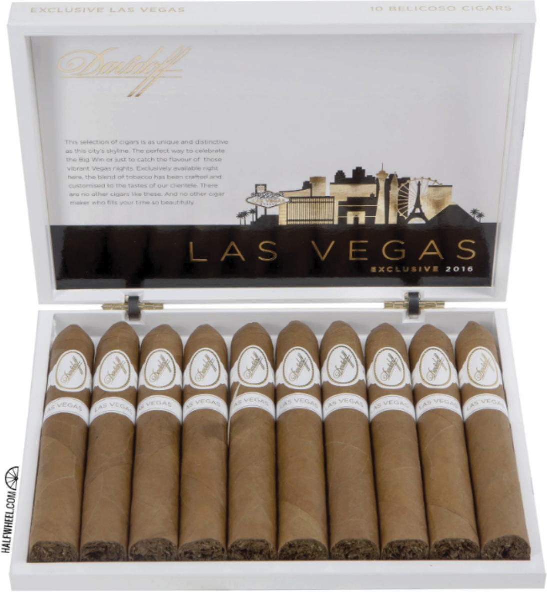
While the motif didn't extend to the cigars, the La Flor Dominicana Beer Stein was one of the showpiece presentations released in 2015, and as such a fitting addition to this year's packaging awards. — *PL*

(Image via La Flor Dominicana)


WELCOME TO Fabulous LAS VEGAS NEVADA
DAVIDOFF EXCLUSIVE
EXCLUSIVE
LAS VEGAS
HALFWHEEL.COM

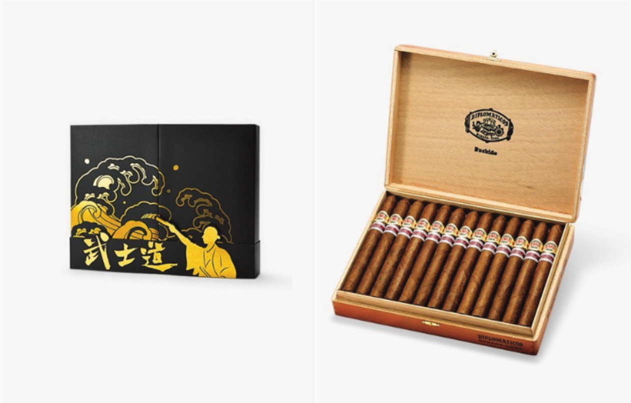
4. DAVIDOFF LAS VEGAS EXCLUSIVE

When a company creates an exclusive cigar, it can take the simple route of throwing a standard band on it and putting in a standard box, or it can go above and beyond and give the cigar its own unique look, and in this case, a sense of place. For its series of Davidoff store exclusives, the company took what is one of the most iconic parts of any big city—its skyline—and transferred it to the box in classic Davidoff style.


EXCLUSIVE LAS VEGAS
10 BELICOSO CIGARS
Davidoff
This selection of cigars is as unique and distinctive as this city's skyline. The perfect way to celebrate the Big Win or just to catch the flavour of those vibrant Vegas nights. Exclusively available right here, the blend of tobacco has been crafted and customised to the tastes of our clientele. There are no other cigars like these. And no other cigar maker who fills your time so beautifully.
LAS VEGAS
EXCLUSIVE 2016
LAS VEGAS
HALFWHEEL.COM

Each of the high-shine white boxes in the series received a topping that depicts each city's skyline in black with gold trim, while the cigars received the more subdued approach of the classic Davidoff white label band with a secondary band denoting the location for which it was made, with Hong Kong and Toyko getting the added touch of a flower on that additional band.

The complete impact of each individual Davidoff Exclusive Series is only felt when purchased by the box, since it is on that bigger canvas where the presentation truly shines, and the full series displayed side by side brings the entire release together in the vein of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Still, the idea of uniting both a cigar and its home in such classic and stylish representation can't go overlooked, which helped solidify its place on this year's list. — *PL.*


武士道
DIPLOMATICOS
Bushido
DIPLOMATICOS

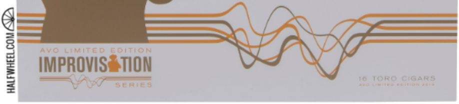
3. DIPLOMÁTICOS BUSHIDO

If you asked most people to name off some Cuban cigar brands, you more than likely wouldn't hear many say the name Diplomatico.

Currently sporting only one regular production size, you might think it an odd choice for an Edición Regional release, however it was chosen as one of the special releases for the Asia-Pacific region. The Diplomatico Bushido not only comes in the very popular and rare 109 vitola, but the varnished wood box that holds the cigars comes in another beautiful box, sporting gold on black silhouettes and artwork that are very reminiscent of classic Japanese art styles. The outer decorative box opens in the middle, revealing the inner box in a dramatic fashion, making this an easy choice to reside at the number three spot on our list. — *BB.*

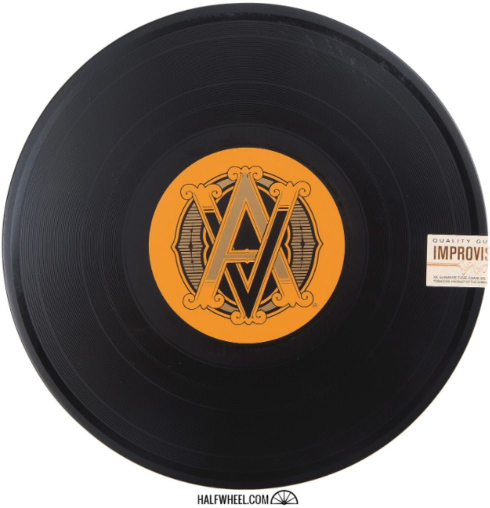
(Image via La Casa del Habano by Cigar Club)

CLASSIC 2015 COVERS
VOLUME 2


HALFWHEEL.COM
AVO LIMITED EDITION
IMPROVISATION
SERIES
16 TORO CIGARS

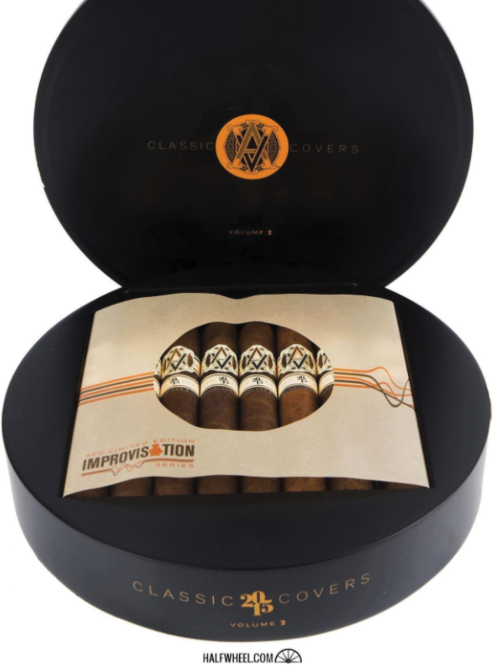
2. AVO CLASSIC COVERS VOLUME 2

It was my vote for the best packaging of the year and I'm still not sure how it came up short.


QUALITY GU
IMPROVIS
HALFWHEEL.COM

As far as I'm concerned, AVO has the best packaging of any non-Cuban brand on the market. The AVO logo is simply classic. So when Davidoff decided to revamp the brand's look in 2015, I was concerned to say the least. Fortunately, it was more botox than a nose job, a much subtler update than that which the Camacho brand received in 2012.

Perhaps best of all, Davidoff didn't end the long history of AVO limited editions featuring stunning and unique packaging. The AVO Classic Covers Volume 2 is designed to look like a record and it does, or at least a stack of them. It was one of a handful of releases this year to incorporate magnets meaning the circular shape is uninterrupted by hinges. Up close, the grooves of a record become apparent, a touch that transforms this from just another round box into something truly stunning.

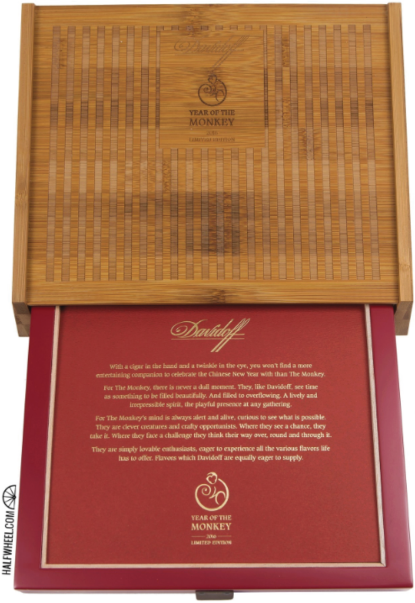

CLASSIC COVERS
VOLUME 2
AVO LIMITED EDITION
IMPROVISATION
SERIES
CLASSIC 2015 COVERS
VOLUME 2
HALFWHEEL.COM

Davidoff of Geneva USA went so far as to create retail display pieces designed to look like record holders. Combine all of the attention to detail with the new AVO design language and it's another hallmark piece in a long history of incredible cigar packaging. — *CM.*

Davidoff
YEAR OF THE
MONKEY
2016
LIMITED EDITION
HALFWHEEL.COM

1. DAVIDOFF LIMITED EDITION 2016 YEAR OF THE MONKEY

Every year the staff at halfwheel asks: *how can Davidoff top last year's packaging?* Every year, they do.



With a cigar in the hand and a twinkle in the eye, you won't find a more entertaining companion to celebrate the Chinese New Year with than The Monkey.

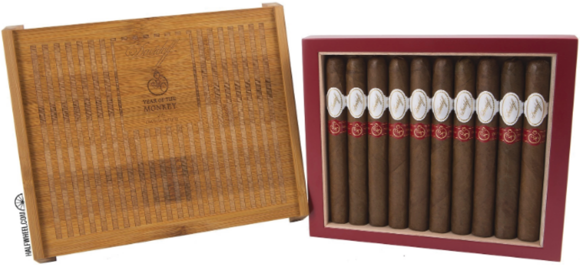
For The *Monkey*, there is never a dull moment. They, like Davidoff, see time as something to be filled beautifully. And filled to overflowing. A lively and irrepressible spirit, the playful presence at any gathering.

For The *Monkey's* mind is always alert and alive, curious to see what is possible. They are clever creatures and crafty opportunists. Where they see a chance, they take it. Where they face a challenge they think their way over, round and through it.

They are simply lovable enthusiasts, eager to experience all the various flavors life has to offer. Flavors which Davidoff are equally eager to supply.

Davidoff
YEAR OF THE
MONKEY
2016
LIMITED EDITION
Davidoff
YEAR OF THE
MONKEY
2016
LIMITED EDITION
HALFWHEEL.COM

This year was no different, as the packaging for the Year of the Monkey shows. While the familiar colors of red and gold are still present—both very popular colors in the Chinese culture—they are more of an accent in this release. Instead, the main course is the exterior shell of the box, which is made of bamboo, while the actual cigars are in a tray that slides in and out.



Davidoff
YEAR OF THE
MONKEY
HALFWHEEL.COM

Excluding the Year of the Snake release, the design is easily the most unique in Davidoff's Zodiac series so far, and it will be interesting to see what the company does to try and top it in future editions. — *BW.*

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